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ABSTRACT

Georgia State University underwent an accreditation visit believed to be unique in postsecondary education. Eleven agencies sent their committees to the campus during one week in May 1977. The evaluators from these agencies totaled 72. The coordinated approach was aimed at reducing the institutional burden by saving time, effort, and money, while providing an interlocked evaluation process. A survey was undertaken, and is reported here, to present views of institutional participants about the coordinated accreditation visit. The response of 53 individuals are reported and compared with those of an earlier survey of agency committee members. In addition, the strengths and weaknesses of the coordinated accreditation process are enumerated for the benefit of agencies and institutions interested in the coordinated approach. (HSE)

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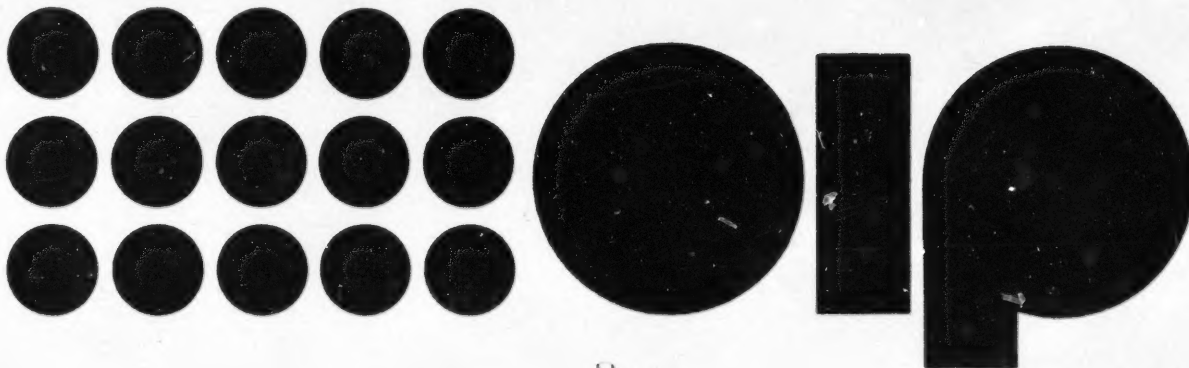
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OFFICE OF
INSTITUTIONAL
PLANNING



GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY
ATLANTA, GEORGIA



HOW GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY PERSONNEL
VIEWED THE COORDINATED ACCREDITATION VISIT
OF MULTIPLE AGENCIES

REPORT NO. 78-12

by

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Office of Institutional Planning
Georgia State University

December, 1977

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INTRODUCTION

In 1975 Georgia State University (GSU) initiated its decennial self study preparatory to a visit by a committee from the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Early in the process the institution entered into discussions with the Executive Secretary of the Commission to examine the possibility of bringing together as many of the programmatic or specialized accrediting agencies as possible for a coordinated visit with the SACS group in the spring of 1977. A strong effort is being put forth by this regional association with encouragement from the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) to persuade institutions, especially universities, to attempt a coordinated visit by several accrediting agencies. This approach is aimed at reducing the institutional burden by saving time, effort and money, while providing an interlocked evaluation process.

A poll of agencies revealed much interest in the coordinated venture, and a number of accrediting groups agreed to join SACS in the visit to GSU which involved rearranging their own calendar of visitations and sending their committees the first week of May, 1977. These agencies included:

- American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA)
- American Dietetic Association (ADA)
- American Medical Association (AMA)
- American Physical Therapy Association (APTA)
- American Psychological Association (APA)
- Georgia State Department of Education (GSDE)
- National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences (NAACLS)
- National Association of Schools of Art (NASA)
- National Association of Schools of Music (NASM)
- National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)

The team of evaluators representing all of the above agencies totaled 72--the largest visiting committee brought to a single campus at one time in the history of accreditation.

Two surveys have been conducted to assess this coordinated visitation experiment which is believed to be unique at postsecondary institutions. It is hoped that the results of these surveys of visiting committee participants and institutional representatives will provide insight into the process and aid both accrediting agencies and institutions concerned with the efficiency and effectiveness of an accreditation visit, especially those involving multiple agencies.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to present the views of institutional participants on the coordinated accreditation visit. (It is noteworthy that 400 faculty, administrators and students served on self-study committees at GSU preparatory to the visit, and that these committees were chaired largely by teaching faculty.) A comparison is also made of these survey results with the earlier survey of agencies (Ezell, Smith and Bryson, 1977). The strengths and weaknesses of this approach to a visitation are provided from two perspectives.

METHODOLOGY

The survey instrument (Appendix A) was mailed on September 30, 1977 through the university mail service to those institutional participants who are believed to have had some interface with one or more members of the visiting teams. Of the 102 persons queried, responses were received from 53 (52 percent).

The survey instrument sought to assess whether the coordinated visit was judged to be facilitative, distracting or had no effect on the accreditation visit. It also provided open-ended questions for identifying advantages and

disadvantages to the institution of this visit as well as suggestions for improving the institutional and agency processes of a coordinated joint visit. Verbatim transcripts to open-ended questions are provided in Appendix B and were the basis for the generalized assessments.

RESULTS

Table 1 summarizes the demographic data of the institutional respondents. The table also indicates that 50.9 percent rated the experiment of the coordinated or joint visit as "facilitative," 41.5 percent answered that it had "no effect" and 7.6 percent judged it to be "distracting." In the survey of agency participants, 34.4 percent of the respondents rated the experiment as "facilitative," 52.5 percent answered that it had "no effect," and 13.1 percent viewed it to be "distracting."

TABLE 1

RESPONSES BY UNIVERSITY PERSONNEL TO THE COORDINATED ACCREDITATION VISIT
 Note: N's on some items are larger than N in survey group due to multiple responses

	Vice President	Acad. Admin.	Gen. Admin.	Dept. Chairmen	Teaching Faculty	Student	Other	N	Total
<u>Primary responsibility regarding Self Study</u>									
Univ. Steering Committee	1	1	1	2	3	1	1	7	11.3
One of 11 University-wide Com.	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	20	32.2
College Steering Committee	1	1	1	3	2	1	1	8	12.9
11 College Wide Committees	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	4.6
Departmental Committees	1	1	1	3	2	1	1	15	19.4
Other	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	12	19.4
Total	2	4	7	22	17	1	6	62	100.0
<u>How many accreditation visits have you observed?</u>									
None	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	8	14.6
One or two	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
Three to six	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	8	14.6
More than six	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
Total	2	4	7	22	17	1	6	62	100.0
<u>With what agencies were you involved?</u>									
None	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	8	14.6
AAACSB	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
ACA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
APPA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
MAACSL	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
ASA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
AAA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
ANCA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
MAA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
MAA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
State Dept. of Education	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
Not involved	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
Total	2	4	7	22	17	1	6	62	100.0
<u>How would you describe overall effect of visit?</u>									
Facilitative	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	8	14.6
No effect	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
Distracting	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
Total	2	4	7	22	17	1	6	62	100.0
<u>Check visiting committee members present in any exit meeting</u>									
None	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	8	14.6
AAACSB	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
ACA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
APPA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
MAACSL	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
ASA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
AAA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
ANCA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
MAA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
MAA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
State Dept. of Education	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
Not involved in exit meetings	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	14.6
Total	2	4	7	22	17	1	6	62	100.0

Generalizations Based on Written Comments of University Personnel

Written comments provided by the respondents to the survey proved to be very interesting, and some generalizations can be formed from them. The summary below is organized around the four basic questions which were asked. The questions themselves are used as subheadings for this section.

What do you perceive as institutional advantages of a coordinated joint visit by accrediting agencies?

The majority of the faculty, staff, and students who commented on this question made note of the apparent saving in time, expense, and effort for the institution in having as many agencies as possible visit at the same time. Much emphasis was given to this point. From the point of view of time, it is apparent that many felt that the joint visit made it possible to concentrate in one time frame many separate visits and eliminated the disadvantages of a stream of visits coming year after year. Related to this was a belief that the institution saved money (which is time) by developing information at one time, and by dealing with the logistics of the visits at one time. It was also pointed out that this experience made it possible to generate and develop information across the University and in all its units which could be shared in the various studies and reports necessary to meet requirements of the individual agencies involved. This point is apparently a very important one, for in theory, at least, it obviates the massive duplication of effort for many offices of the University when studies and reports are required on a recurring basis year after year for separate accrediting agencies and associations. A common thread running through many of the comments implied that the coordinated joint visit at least provided an opportunity to view the University "holistically," and that an institution at least should be able to "perceive and evaluate its purpose and achievement, its strengths and weaknesses in a holistic way."

There was also a general feeling expressed, as one respondent put it, that the process provides a "minimal dislocation or distraction of the institutional program by maximizing the use of resources for common objectives at one time." The word "efficiency" was also used frequently by respondents. Generally, then, combined visitations as perceived by the respondents might be said to have the advantages of lower cost, more efficiency, and less upheaval for the institution over the long run.

What do you perceive as institutional disadvantages of a coordinated joint visit by accrediting agencies?

Respondents to the survey also addressed themselves to what they perceived as disadvantages of the effort of joint or coordinated visits. Two words frequently used to sum up these disadvantages from the comments were "confusion" and "disruption." Although some of the comments criticized the agencies for lack of advance planning and lack of coordination, often it was the process itself which was accused of being unmanageable. Too many visitors (72 in this case), the extreme complications of scheduling interviews and time of visitors and staff members, and the excessive strain on the University, logistically and otherwise, were often cited as major disadvantages. It was also noted that the massive dose from a single visit frequently cancelled out useful criticism and dissipated rather than enhanced the strength of the various reports. As one commentator observed, perhaps it was "too much all at once."

What are your suggestions for improving the institutional process of a coordinated joint visit by accrediting agencies?

From the perspective of the institutional process, it was suggested generally that the length of the visit might be longer for coordinated joint visits and a more flexible time schedule should be developed. The institution was admonished also to give more attention to the details of planning in advance, and hold as many meetings as necessary between faculty, administration, and students participating in the self-study process to arrive at summary

statements on major issues and problems requiring attention in order to serve all agencies. More than anything else, a closer, more specific, detailed, coordinated planning effort for the on-site phase should be made and agreed upon far in advance by and among the institution and all of the agencies involved. Hope was expressed that in the future, agencies and institutions seriously interested in the possibilities of the coordinated visit would work out a common format for self studies and for reporting on standards that would at the same time be flexible enough to allow for all of the unique and separate needs of the general accrediting agencies and the programmatic agencies. That is, one self study done at all levels of the institution, and one common information base should be developed to serve all participating groups.

What are your suggestions for improving the accrediting agency process of a coordinated joint visit to an institution?

When given the opportunity to respond to this question, the institutional respondents provided numerous suggestions. A frequent or common suggestion was that the planning for coordination among the agencies which accept the invitation to come together should be carried out in much more detail and far ahead of the visit. It was believed that this would go far toward eliminating many of the logistical problems of the agencies themselves. There must be more willingness among the participating agencies to modify their own processes to develop a common core of scheduling, information sharing, and other ingredients of a common game plan. There should be better planning and coordination especially between the regional association team and the programmatic agencies which are joining the visit. This is particularly true for the work of the chairmen of all agencies involved. The agency suggestions for improving the process, based upon the earlier survey, contained similar items: "More preliminary planning between and among the groups prior to the visit, reducing the size of teams, and closer cooperation among the agencies into a real team effort." (p. 10).

SOME IMPLICATIONS FROM THE RESPONSES OF VISITORS
AND INSTITUTIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Drawing from the earlier survey of accrediting association visitors, and from the survey and analysis of responses from the institution itself, certain implications might be made about the strengths and weaknesses, not only of this single experiment with the coordinated visit, but also for future similar efforts by other institutions. They are:

(1) The overall time, effort, and money expended by an institution can be decreased by scheduling a coordinated/joint visit by multiple accrediting agencies instead of separate, individual visits by various agencies.

(2) A comprehensive institutional effort toward a joint visit can provide a common core of information and an advantageous sharing of information which can benefit the institution and the accrediting agencies involved.

(3) An interlocked or comprehensive institutional preparatory process does not of itself insure an interlocked evaluation process by multiple accrediting agencies.

(4) Lack of very careful long-range planning between and among the institution and all accrediting agencies involved as well as a lack of commonly understood and accepted guidelines for the conduct of the on-site evaluation process can bring about excessive on-site confusion and a logistical nightmare. Visiting committee members should be aware not only of their individual responsibilities to the agencies they represent, but also of their agencies' commitments to the overall coordinated effort.

REFERENCE

Ezell, J. B., Smith, G. & Bryson, C. H. An Assessment of the Coordinated Accrediting Visit to Georgia State University by Visiting Committee Members, Report No. 78-2, Office of Institutional Planning, August, 1977.

Georgia State University

university plaza
atlanta, georgia 30303

office of institutional planning

September 30, 1977

MEMORANDUM TO: Members of the Faculty

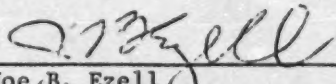
SUBJECT: Evaluation of Visit by Accreditation Committees

Now that the University Self Study and visitation have been completed, we are interested in evaluating the results of the visitation process. You probably know that we were involved in an experiment with the visitation by attempting to bring together multiple agencies for a coordinated or joint visit. You should also be interested to know that this was the largest group of evaluators brought to a single campus at one time in the history of accreditation.

We have asked the members of the visiting teams to respond to a questionnaire about the process of the visitation; that is, its pluses and minuses, its strengths and weaknesses. An analysis is being made of the results of their responses to this survey.

We need your assistance also to evaluate, from our own institutional perspective, the success/failure of this effort. You can help us do this by completing the attached questionnaire and returning it to me as soon as possible. Copies of the form have been sent to those members of the faculty and administration who are believed to have had some interface with one or more members of the visiting teams. When the responses have been analyzed, we will share the findings with all appropriate agencies and individuals.

Thank you for your assistance in this important project.



Joe B. Ezell
Assistant Vice President for
Institutional Planning

/dt

COORDINATED ACCREDITING VISITS OF TEN AGENCIES TO GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY:
AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PROCESS BY THE INSTITUTIONAL PARTICIPANTS

Georgia State University has recently participated in a coordinated accrediting visit by multiple agencies. Your candid assessment of this process will be of benefit to all agencies and institutions involved with the accreditation process.

Please respond to the following items by checking the appropriate box (✓):

- At Georgia State University which best describes your primary responsibilities?

- 1 () 1 Vice President
() 2 Academic Administrator (Dean/Director/Librarian)
() 3 General Administrator (other than Vice President)
() 4 Academic Department Chairman
() 5 Teaching Faculty
() 6 Student
() 7 Other

- What was your primary responsibility regarding the Self Study?

- 2 () 1 University Steering Committee
() 2 One of the Eleven University-wide Committees
() 3 College Steering Committee
() 4 One of the Eleven College-wide Committees
() 5 Departmental Committee
() 6 Other

- How many accreditation visits have you personally observed?

- 3 () 1 None
() 2 One or two
() 3 Three to six
() 4 More than six

- With what agencies were you involved for this accreditation visit to Georgia State University?

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| 4-5 () 01 SACS | () 07 AMA |
| () 02 NCATE | () 08 AAMA |
| () 03 ADA | () 09 NASM |
| () 04 APTA | () 10 NASA |
| () 05 NAACLS | () 11 State Dept. of Education |
| () 06 APA | () 99 Not involved |

- How would you describe the overall effect of the coordinated accreditation visit upon your individual work for the Self Study?

- 6 () 1 Facilitative
() 2 No effect
() 3 Distracting

Additional comments?

- Check (✓) the visiting committee members who were present in any exit meeting you attended.

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|
| 7-8 () 01 SACS | () 07 AMA |
| () 02 NCATE | () 08 AAMA |
| () 03 ADA | () 09 NASM |
| () 04 APTA | () 10 NASA |
| () 05 NAACLS | () 11 State Dept. of Education |
| () 06 APA | () 99 Not involved in exit meetings |

- What do you perceive as institutional advantages of a coordinated joint visit by accrediting agencies?

1. _____

2. _____

(Please complete sections on reverse side of page)

Page 2 -- Coordinated Accrediting Visits of Ten Agencies to Georgia State University.
An Assessment of the Process by the Institutional Participants

- What do you perceive as institutional disadvantages of a coordinated joint visit by accrediting agencies?

1. _____

2. _____

- What are your suggestions for improving the institutional process of a coordinated joint visit by accrediting agencies?

- What are your suggestions for improving the accrediting agency process of a coordinated joint visit to an institution?

- Additional comments:

Thank you for your cooperation in evaluating this coordinated joint visit. Please return this form to:

Office of Institutional Planning (137 Sparks)
Georgia State University
University Plaza
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

APPENDIX B

VERBATIM TRANSCRIPTS TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Q. What do you perceive as institutional advantages of a coordinated joint visit by accrediting agencies?

A. An opportunity to view the University holistically--to coordinate strategies, programs, etc. I don't think that this happened here in any meaningful way.

Savings: Time, expense, and effort. Having one big visitation and getting it over with at one time. Enhances coordination, cooperation, and interrelationships of the various accrediting agencies. It should result in better understanding and a greater sharing of information.

Constructive evolution of areas in which progressive changes can be made.

Cuts time and waste; potential for reinforcement.

Efficient use of University staff, time. Key people can be "on tap" for several days but then the process is completed.

I don't perceive any advantages except that the entire procedure is completed at one time period.

Great savings in time and resources due to ability to present all necessary data to a number of agencies at the same time.

Preparation for visitations is not spread out over a longer period than was already experienced.

Central administrative involvement at one time instead of continuous.

Minimizing the number of visits.

Efficiency.

Work effort can be coordinated and made more efficient.

Time and money savings.

Get it all over at the same time.

I can't really comment. We did not have a professional accrediting group on campus and my experience was like any normal Southern Association visitation.

Improvement of program administration.

Potential savings in money, time, and energy by University personnel. Multiple consultative points of view regarding the educational program.

Eliminate duplication in the preparation of necessary statistical data.

Consolidates effort. Reduces frequency of disruptive visits.

Possibly saves time for presidential through dean level by avoiding multiple visits spread throughout year(s).

The institution must "gear up" for accrediting visits. Therefore, a joint visit makes optimum use of that energy at a given time.

Preparation of reports was simplified. Only one visitation effort.

Fewer days during which personnel are tied up with visiting committee activities. Data gathered for one group would still be accurate for other groups.

None that I could see, but I have been told that it saves the administration time which is money. If this is true, then it would be worth it.

Less total disruption of normal activities.

The institution is able to perceive and evaluate its purpose and achievement, its strengths and weaknesses in a holistic way.

A better perspective of total function. Synthetic approach.

The chief institutional advantage is the saving of faculty and administrative time. There is some advantage in the coordination of self-study efforts.

Reports and studies can be done at longer intervals instead of having one every other year or two. The functions of different evaluators can be very helpful to the institution and to have them consolidated at one time, as in one report, is a decided advantage.

Faculty time is better utilized in concentrated dosage. Any conflicts between accrediting requirements better treated in one coordinated visit.

Prior preparation forces review and coordination of collegiate and University thrusts relative to objectives, producing a unified position for all facets of the institution and permitting sound, comparable responses from all segments of the institution. The greatest advantage lies in the stimulation provided for the planning process based on introspective evaluation of where we have been and where we are aiming to be. The second major advantage is minimal dislocation or distraction of institutional program by maximizing use of resources for common objectives at one time.

The joint accreditation visit was a very good idea because preparation for the visit could be coordinated between several colleges of study and departments within the College so that the visitation went smoothly. The joint visitation also enables several accrediting organizations to get together to see and discuss GSU's programs of study and its progress as an institution of higher learning.

One major disruption rather than sporadic lesser disturbances. Perhaps less duplication of effort--one study serving, or partially serving, more than one purpose.

Self evaluation of programs.

Documenting strengths within each department. Exposing weaknesses in the departments.

Easier scheduling and arranging on the mechanical aspects of the visit(s)--transportation, lodging, etc. This is both lower cost and lower trauma. Presumably there could be an advantage in coordinated self-evaluation reporting--I did not see this, however, at GSU.

Get it all over with at once.

The process forces the receiving institution to pause and take inventory of its purpose, organizational structure, and activities. The visit facilitates obtaining unbiased views of visiting professionals. To what degree these observations should be accepted as fact is debatable. However, they should not be ignored during the process of continued self analysis.

Save time--the same (essentially) materials served two purposes (programs and Southern Association). Also all "over with" at one time.

Time saving and allows for concentrated effort.

Get it over in one major event rather than prolonged agony of several visits.

Saves the institution a great deal of time and should be less expensive in the long run.

Avoids the duplicate preparation in self-study for separate visits.

Gets it over in a brief period of time.

Since much of the information generated for one committee can be used for others, it reduces the duplication of effort. Logistics problems can be compressed into a smaller time period--get it over all at once.

Cost factors should be major advantages once process is fully developed. Particular advantage to have representatives of professional agencies who are practitioners and may or may not be actively involved in education. Meet with representatives of educational agencies who are educators and may or may not be involved as practitioners. There is bound to be a mutual gain of knowledge and perspective.

Q: What do you perceive as institutional disadvantages of a coordinated joint visit by accrediting agencies?

A: If the University does not correct mistakes, develop new thrusts, relationships, concepts, etc., then much effort can be wasted.

Difficulties in managing a very large group of people. Problems of logistics are increased. Conflicts in scheduling interviews with "key" University personnel. Lack of sufficient time to do everything that needs to be done. Things get hectic and perhaps distracting--pressures mount on both sides and the situation can become tense.

None.

Confusion; difficulty in finding adequate number of competent visitors.

Scheduling problems created "jams" on several occasions.

Too many officers visiting at one time. The specific agencies did not give enough or sufficient time to fulfill their functions.

As long as we must undergo institutional accreditation visits I see no disadvantage to a coordinated joint visit.

Difficulty meeting specific requirements of all agencies at one general session.

I saw none.

Staff energies displaced to a disruptive degree during a short time.

None.

A lot of disruption for two days. A special effort might be required to prepare somewhat different materials for two or more agencies.

The time involved.

Extraordinary planning activities to make the visit effective. Confusion during the visit--outweighed over the long run.

The possible cancelling out of useful criticism by members of different accreditation teams. Necessary repetition of personal opinions and interpretations to various visitors.

Produced good image of administrative leaders.

Impaired effectiveness of visiting committee resulting in superficial report/recommendations.

Perhaps too much all at once (for some).

SACS Report and committee seemed to be confused about their role responsibilities. SACS Report was particularly weak and unhelpful. Perhaps it was felt that other agencies would look to matters of importance to the whole University.

Individual groups needing to see the same officials could not all have access to the same people for sufficient time. The degree of disruption during the visit days would be greater.

Too many people whose activities were not coordinated. Programmatic teams did not get adequate personalized time with the dean, President. They met the dean and many other people present and could not get specific. This dilutes the evaluation process.

The multiplicity of investigations and evaluations carried on or presented simultaneously can tend to confuse by fragmenting conclusions.

Too many meetings. Not enough time to spend with each group.

I did not observe the visitation personally, but I imagine that having such a large number on campus at one time might result in hurried and superficial inspection.

There can be some duplication among members of the Visiting Committee so that the same information has to be given by the same person several times during the visit. It is possible that the purposes and objectives of the various agencies will work at cross-purposes with one another.

Anxiety levels of the institution raised to a high level (perhaps better one anxiety rather than many smaller ones).

Division of attention and distraction from parochial goals in the process. The admixture of specialists and generalists and inordinately large numbers of interviewers makes for division of effort and scattering of attention.

This visitation could create a heavy paperwork load in faculty members who had to prepare for both. The visitation could also drain the time of several department chairmen and professors who acted as hosts to the visitors or who answered their questions.

Possible difficulty in scheduling interview time with University key personnel because of tight time frames. Less than thorough treatment by any one agency.

Efficient use of time.

The institution receives less critical review because there is little or no overlap among agencies. When 10 different agencies all review a university-wide policy there is more criticism than when it is reviewed once. The report to the institution is likely to be richer because each committee must build its own case; each has to work broadly, and hence richly, at the institution.

It tends to disrupt ongoing activities of key personnel of the institution. However, since such visits are infrequent, this is acceptable.

None, providing all visitors do what they should to contribute to the total project.

This would depend upon interest levels of teams.

University not intensely enough involved with the problems addressed by any single agency--superficial.

Less time spent with each agency--probably less thorough evaluation.

Accrediting agency visitors may want to visit with faculty at same time that Southern Association members choose.

Perhaps no agency gives a hard look; for example, the SACS Visiting Committee Report was terribly inadequate and did not address some serious problems identified in the self-study.

Very confusing.

Possible overload of specific key individuals might result in less in-depth analysis.

Can perceive of none at my level, but do feel consideration must be given to normal faculty workloads when tasks this time consuming are undertaken. Would prevent a lot of frustration and broken friendships!

Q. What are your suggestions for improving the institutional process of a coordinated joint visit by accrediting agencies?

A. Plan for a longer and more flexible time schedule. Reduce size of visiting committees and encourage more sharing of "findings." Each group should not have to personally investigate every aspect of the University as it results in duplication and wasted effort.

There needs to be much stronger leadership. I suggest visitors should be selected on basis of competence in subject areas; Geog. should play no part; visitors should be from colleges we wish to emulate, not those we surpass or hope to surpass. . . .

I favor separate visits at different time intervals.

More involvement by Regents, outstanding alumni, community leaders.

This recommendation would apply to single or joint visits. I suggest the University have a policy that requires annual reports on those items listed in the Standards. This means that every ten years a body of data would exist for the self-study committees.

Try it again--working through difficulties identified at this session.

A central control group to insure schedules are maintained.

None.

Keep it up!

None.

More planning at the institution, then actual planning with the visitors just prior to the formal visit. This probably will entail at least an extra half-day prior to the visit by representatives of the University and chairmen or members of the accrediting agencies.

Have visitors' questions submitted to central office to be meted out before visiting any University personnel.

Better coordination of documentation (Univ) prior to visit.

None.

Not well-informed enough to comment.

Better planning and coordination between the Southern Association and the ten agencies--schedules planned, meetings to coordinate work, i.e., the SACS person who was to evaluate the College of Allied Health Sciences did not coordinate well (in fact, ignored) the agencies surveying the programs. He had no pre-planned schedule, therefore disrupted existing schedules that had been pre-planned for several months.

Precede the coordinated joint visit by a seminar to explain to pertinent people the agencies and purposes.

I think the accrediting agencies should be at GSU for at least one day to receive orientation by the officers of our University before they begin meeting with groups.

I have none, but I do think the Southern Association's response to the Institutional Self-Study was superficial, almost perfunctory. This institution learned a great deal about itself during the process of self-study, but it learned little or nothing from the Southern Association.

Advance planning seems to be the key to the entire operation. Each time we do this kind of thing we will learn better ways of coordination.

None. From my perspective I thought the entire effort was very well orchestrated. It seemed to operate on schedule with a minimum of delay.

Prior to the initial visit suggested such meetings are as necessary between faculty and administration participating in the self-study to arrive at summary statements of goals and objectives, major issues, major planning thrusts, problem areas requiring attention; each summarized in a page or two for review by the Accreditation Team Executive Committee would tend to focus primary attention on the priority issues.

I suggest that institutions should know five years in advance if there will be a joint visitation, what organizations will participate, and what the standards for accreditation will be. Preparation of necessary statistics and data for placement information written form must begin to be collected.

More structured availability of key personnel.

Make visit longer so more details of responsibility sharing among committee(s) members can be worked out. Place greater emphasis on the follow-up and follow-through of the self study than on the follow-up of the visit. The visit will be less valuable, and hence it is the self-study which should be followed through by the administration, etc.

Shorten the time of self study. Committee chairmen experienced a constant turnover of members, thus disrupting committee progress and resulting in crash programs to meet deadlines. A shorter period of work, and emphasis on the need for cohesiveness of Committees should improve results.

Program evaluators need to "visit" administration on a personal basis rather than as a group with other officials evaluating other programs. This would take more time of deans, etc.

If possible find common areas each agency needs to study and incorporate into the GSU self-study. Have administration involved with the individual agency self-studies before the actual visit.

Encourage all agencies to engage in an "independent" look at their areas of responsibility.

Spread the visits out over a longer period.

It was not very close to the process, but it seemed to go well.

Have the same team members continue as a team at other institutions gradually adding replacements so that concept gains meaning and the process is developed by participants, not on-lookers!

Q. What are your suggestions for improving the accrediting agency process of a coordinated visit to an institution?

A. Have accrediting agency require a self-study similar to the one required by SACS for various departments.

Best asked of the visitors.

Make sure scheduling of contacts is on time. When teams are late, this interferes with other scheduled activities.

If accrediting agency visitors could meet together in planning to "share" visits with officials, then meet again to share opinions, etc., this would be very difficult considering time each program requires.

Get them to agree on common calendars and visit formats--how many days, who stays till the end, etc.

Possibly extend time limit if present time frame is inadequate to do a thorough analysis of a large University.

The visiting agencies should notify the institution being visited if they are participating in the joint visitation and what standards they will be expecting to be informed of.

Prior visitation by an Executive Committee of the visitation team for review of the problems with the Steering Committee and much more detailed planning of individual schedules by the teams in advance would have produced an efficient visit. Better contacts and a stronger objective and problems solution set would undoubtedly have been the result.

I had expected some duplication of effort but did not experience any.

The agencies which are involved need to consult in advance of the visit to undertake as much coordination as possible. Some might even have to modify existing procedures and practices to achieve the larger goal.

If the response of the Southern Association was influenced by the coordinated joint visit, I would say something is gravely wrong. The recommendations made by the Southern Assn. were far less meaningful than the recommendations made by the university-wide committees. If the perfunctory response was in some way the result of having too many people on campus at one time, I'd say the joint visit is a mistake.

The agencies need to be better prepared. They need to do their homework. I felt some of the questions asked showed no grasp of the situation at GSU. They were often asking questions and making comments not from direct knowledge of the situation or from experience, but only a "textbook" concept.

None at this time.

Not well-informed enough to comment.

None.

More attention by chairman and programmatic committee heads to advance planning and coordination of visit itself. Possibly add one day to visit.

Active cooperation in the planning process; a willingness to accept others' (particularly "generalists") surveys and opinions as part of the programmatic visit and thus reduce the total numbers of visitors necessary.

None.

None.

Development of process or procedure whereby professional agency accepts reviews of some areas by representatives from other agencies.

Select visitors who have had experience and who are willing to be "hard-nosed" about their recommendations. This past visiting committee, in my opinion, was a disaster.

Have indepth questioning and perceptive questions. Approach the institution without a preconceived notion or frame of reference.

Might consider giving such a substantial honorarium that visitors feel under obligation to work hard.

Allow more time for the exit meeting and broaden the participation to include a much larger segment of the University community.

Visitors should interview chairmen of committees or even have a session with each university-wide committee. Visitors can thereby assess the extent of the impact and efforts of the university-wide committees. I was co-chairman of the Faculty Committee and did not receive either a call or a visit. I think our internal efforts were well organized and very effectively led.

Additional Comments:

I reserve judgment on the overall process until I have seen the results. If no results are possible, I'd like to know where the bottleneck is.

I was chairman, Dept. of Nursing, at the time of the visit. It is my personal opinion that it would have been to our advantage to have participated in the visit because in many instances strengths and weaknesses in the system are shared by all departments. Identifying these together support collaborative resolution of problems and continued recognition and support of strengths.

If the coordinated visit is responsible for the pitiful and incompetent report of the Visiting Committee (in that they thought critical issues would be covered somewhere else), then let's not do this again. Otherwise it is a good time-saving idea.

In general, the SACS report (written) was a great disappointment! So much could have been said constructively to assist us as we evolve toward greatness. The opportunity was missed. I would give the Visiting Committee an "F."

When it comes down to the bottom line, I don't think the idea is sound. Perhaps there is more to be done than can reasonably be done well in such a short actual visit time.

One reason that priority issues may not have emerged in the team comment may be the fact that each member was expected to read the document in detail, think out his own approach to the visit, and plan his own questions to suit his own focus. Much is lost by that process. In a word, planning the strategy to direct attention to the area requiring it would have been useful, given this particular accrediting team. It is not appropriate to generalize from this experience because much depends on the leadership of individual accreditation teams and their institutional counterparts and the manner in which they determine to approach the problem of a particular site visit.

I feel that the weak SACS report results from a weakly coordinated, multi-agency visit. Each agency appeared to be depending on another to review something and, hence, make fill through the cracks.

Q. How would you describe the overall effect of the coordinated accreditation visit upon your individual work for the Self Study?

- ()1 Facilitative
- ()2 No effect
- ()3 Distracting

Additional Comments?

A. Went very well.

(Distracting) If the ineptness of the visitation report can be blamed on the coordinated visit

It makes sense to do it all at one time.

(No effect) Because our Dept did not have prof visit at that time.

Report was a major disappointment.

Contacts in several areas were ineffectual; in areas of primary interest no contact at all was made. In observed sessions points discussed were minor; self-study areas remain relatively untouched.

The only nice thing is hopefully we will not experience again for several years. Two separate Self Study instruments had to be prepared in our department.

GSU did not accept the NASM Self Study in lieu of its own. In addition, we did a report for NCATE = Triple work!

Much too shallow. Contact by accreditation committee member was rather superficial.